



Founded January 1964

JOURNAL



December 2015

www.torontobonsai.org

Schedule of events

Meetings are held at the TBG ([Toronto Botanical Garden](#)), located at **777 Lawrence Avenue East** (at Leslie St.), Toronto, in the studio rooms upstairs. The first meeting is free for non-members.

Bonsai 101: 7:00

Bonsai 101 is held in Studio #2 upstairs at the TBG. Beginners should read '[INTRODUCTION TO BONSAI](#)' (click on link), posted on the [TBS web site](#) prior to attending class.

Dec. 14: class cancelled for holiday party.

General meetings: 7:45

Dec. 14: Angelo Dumitru will give a presentation on making containers for bonsai, followed by a Christmas-themed party.

There will be 3 door prizes given away during the course of the evening.

Please bring in cookies or any goodies for consumption.

Jan. 11: Indoor (tropical) bonsai presentation.

Feb. 8: Silent auction

Mar. 14: t.b.a.

Outside our club:

Dec. 18-20: Cape Bonsai Kai show, at Kirstenbosch gardens, Cape Town, South Africa.

For details, click on link: <http://www.capebonsaikai.co.za/>

On the cover: Blaauw juniper (*Juniperus chinensis 'Blaauw'*) forest planting bonsai, from the fall show. This forest was first designed by Box Wilcox, and now Mike McCallion has been the owner for several years now.

Photo by Mike Pochwat.

President's message

by Carlos Bras

Season's Greetings to all of you! With this season comes the excitement of giving and receiving presents, and of course, the wonderful foods of the season.

It also harkens the end of the calendar year, and along with that, making New Year's resolutions: why not start planning steps now to improve your bonsai?

The list could be short or long. Here are my own top three bonsai resolutions: studying with multiple bonsai teachers to gain a wider knowledge of bonsai techniques; learning more about grafting on white pines, possibly creating a tanuki; and collecting some trees from the wild, with permission of course. Not lofty goals, but realistic for my schedule and time commitments. What are your 2016 bonsai resolutions going to be?

At our last executive meeting we spent some time thinking about how we could help to create an even more rewarding experience for TBS members. I think you'll find our upcoming meetings will include a number of guest speakers and demos, which will appeal equally to our newer, intermediate, and more seasoned members alike.

We are also planning to start a mentoring program whereby new members can work with an experienced member to fast-track their progress – come talk to me about how this can work for you.

More about these plans will follow in future journals. To achieve our plans, we need help from you by way of your continued membership, and we would love to hear how you might help the club as a volunteer - your participation is the key in taking our club from good to great!

The development of your trees is linked to your involvement with the club, since that will determine the amount of progress in nurturing and developing your bonsai skills!

Small group critique of trees

by Otmar Sauer

The tree critique in November has become an established tradition with our club. This year was as entertaining and informative as in the last years.

The group critique is a great event to get advice on trees-in-progress, and to take a critical look at other members' trees, and come up with an opinion about styling and development.

Everyone had a chance to see what kind of bonsai are being developed by club members, and as it turned out there are some pretty good trees to see in future shows. Each group took notes on the trees, and presented their recommendations at the end.

Special thanks to Kem and others for arranging and shuffling the trees around - it was a great evening.



(Editor's note: the other aspect of this event is the development of club culture and bonsai aesthetic.)

Critiquing bonsai – some guidelines

sent in by Jeff Shortt

Front

There should be a greater mass of foliage behind the tree than in front of it to create a sense of depth.

Man-made cuts or wounds should not be visible from the front unless created as features.

The tree should be 3-dimensional, it should not appear 'flat' when viewed from the side.

The tree should not appear to lean backwards; informal forms should have an apex that leans forward.

Roots

Roots/nebari should run flat along the surface of the compost and not be raised out of the compost (excepting trees grown in a true exposed-root style).

Roots spread should reflect the form of the tree and appear to anchor the tree firmly into the compost; for trees with upright forms the roots should radiate evenly from around the base of the trunk, for slanting forms or cascades the roots should appear stronger on the opposite side of the trunk to the direction of lean.

Roots should appear to be of a roughly even size as they emanate from around the base of the trunk; inferior material will display 1 or 2 disproportionately thick roots only. However, slightly thicker, stronger roots should be located at the sides of the trunk and should not protrude towards the front.

Surface roots should not be straight and should exhibit some taper and branching.

Trunk

With most forms, the trunk must taper from its thinnest point at the apex to its widest point at its base. It is preferable for the trunk to taper as gradually as possible.

The trunk must not have inverse taper; that is to say the base of the trunk should not be thinner than any other point of the trunk.

Half to two-thirds of the trunk should be visible from the front to reveal the structure of the trunk.

Trunks with any slope in any direction should also slope at ground level.

Grafted trunks should not be apparent unless inspected very closely.

Informal forms should preferably have turns or bends that diminish in size and length as the eye travels from trunk base to apex.

Trunks should be cleaned of algae and moss.

Branches

Branches normally commence around one-third to half the height of the tree.

The first branch should be the thickest with the branches thinning in diameter as they progress towards the apex.

The first branch should normally point towards the left or the right when the tree is viewed from the front.

No branch should lie directly above another.

No branch should cross another.

All branches should exhibit taper from trunk to tip.

All branches should be shaped similarly to each other and should reflect the movement (or lack of) in the trunk.

Normally, only branches in the top third of the tree should point directly forwards, towards the viewer.

No two branches should appear from the same place on the trunk (bar branches).

No two branches should appear to be at the same height.

No branches should cross the trunk as seen from the front.

Outline

The tree outline is normally roughly triangular.

Depending on individual species the apex should be triangular or rounded but not pointed.

Group plantings or trees with multiple trunk forms should have an overall triangular outline, this triangular shape should not be symmetrical.

In some groups, a dominant tree can disturb the overall triangular shape.

Foliage, flowers and fruit

Dead or diseased leaves should be removed.

Leaves should not show white lime deposits from being misted or sprayed with hard tap water.

No insects or cobwebs should be visible on the tree.

All leaves should be of similar size; overlarge leaves should be removed.

All flowers or fruit should be free of blemishes.

Critiquing bonsai (cont.)

Pots

Pots should be clean and undamaged.

The colour of the pot should not clash with the dominant colour of the tree whether that be the colour of the leaves, flowers or fruit.

Glazed pots are generally considered better for deciduous species whilst unglazed pots are generally used for coniferous trees.

Antique pots should be used for old trees, new pots should be used for younger trees.

The pot should not distract attention from the tree, it should compliment and enhance it.

Ornate pots are more suitable for flowering and fruiting trees or mame bonsai.

The tree should not be planted centrally in the pot except when a round or square pot is used.

The dominant mass of the tree should be above the centre of the pot. A tree leaning to the right should be planted left of centre so its centre of gravity is above the middle of the pot.

The tree should be planted slightly toward the back of the pot.

The tree should only be over potted for horticultural reasons; visually under potted trees look as though they have thicker trunks than over potted trees.

Compost surface

The tree should be planted dominant, above the surface of the compost, which should slowly fall away in height to the edges of the pot.

The surface should be kept free of weeds and debris from the tree; old leaves and flowers for instance.

The compost surface should not be plain, gravel or mosses can be used to great effect.

The use of small ceramic or wooden animals or models should be used with considerable discretion.

Multi-trunked bonsai

There should not be an even number of stems or trunks.

Multi-trunked trees should have all their stems rising from ground level and not from part way up the trunk.

All stems should emerge from the surface of the compost closely and gradually diverge as they ascend.

All stems or trunks should have a similar form.

The thickness of individual trunks or stems should be in proportion to their heights.

Multi-tree plantings

All trunks should be visible from the front and the side.

There should not be an even number of stems or trunks.

The tallest tree should be planted highest in the pot.

Space in the pot should be left to imply a natural expanse of open ground.

Trunk thickness should be reflected by trunk height.

Tree clinic: nutrient deficiency in bonsai (or any plant)

by Greg Quinn

Besides over-watering and over-fertilizing, under-fertilizing and under-watering are major causes of health problems with your trees, and any other plants. Many growers have noted that nutrient deficiency, and the build up of harmful minerals, are often accompanied by insect and pest problems, since as the plant weakens, it becomes more vulnerable to attack.

About nutrients: plant nutrients fall into two categories: macro nutrients and micro nutrients. Macro nutrients are those elements that are needed in relatively large amounts. They include nitrogen, potassium, sulfur, calcium, magnesium and phosphorus. Micro nutrients are those elements that plants need in small amounts (sometimes trace amounts), like iron, boron, manganese, zinc, copper, chlorine and molybdenum. Both macro- and micro nutrients are naturally obtained by the roots from the soil. Plant roots require certain conditions to obtain these nutrients from the soil. First, the soil must be sufficiently moist to allow the roots to take up and transport the nutrients. Sometimes correcting improper watering strategies will eliminate nutrient deficiency symptoms. Second, the pH of the soil must be within a certain range for nutrients to be release-able from the soil particles. Third, the temperature of the soil must fall within a certain range for nutrient uptake to occur. The optimum range of temperature, pH and moisture is different for different species of plants. Thus, nutrients may be physically present in the soil, but not available to plants. A knowledge of soil pH, texture, and history can be very useful for predicting what nutrients may become deficient.

Tree clinic: nutrient deficiency in bonsai (cont.)

About synthetic vs. organic: with the arrival of all purpose water soluble synthetic fertilizer, many of the problems of nutrient deficiency have been averted; but with the recent advent of organic fertilizers, which may not contain the same elements and trace minerals necessary for healthy plant growth, it helps to know which missing element is causing the deficiency.

About tap water: as you may know, tap water often can be alkaline and/or hard, meaning it contains high concentrations of dissolved minerals, making it high pH, which build up in the soil over time, causing harm. This is one good reason why your bonsai should periodically be repotted. Buildup of such minerals can also cause unsightly deposits to form. If you have a water softener, which uses salt as a recharging agent, the hardness in the water will be replaced with sodium ions (salt water) and a great deal of damage will be done to your bonsai – do not use this water!

About leaves: The first sign of nutrient deficiency that you will notice is unhealthy leaves. After identifying your tree as indoor (tropical) or outdoor (temperate) bonsai, and either deciduous (deciduous trees cut off water and nutrients to the leaves as they go into winter dormancy), or evergreen (evergreens also lose some leaves as they go into winter, but should keep most of their foliage), and checking for insects or other pests, you can begin your diagnosis by accurately identifying symptoms. Please note that there is often some overlap between symptoms and possible deficiencies, since the availability of some nutrients depends on the presence of others.

About quizzes: I was considering making this into a quiz, but since this is Toronto, the land of the serious, where people do not like too much playfulness, and do not have very much patience (especially in traffic) I decided to just give 'em.

Symptoms:

New tip growth dies and the plants become brittle: **boron**.

Tips of young leaves curl and die, causes blossom-end rot: **calcium (gypsum) – too much can limit the availability of other nutrients – uptake dependent on pH.**

Leaves are dark green, young foliage wilts and dies, plant is stunted: **copper**.

Interveinal chlorosis: yellowing between veins of young leaves: **iron – uptake dependent on pH.**

Chlorosis: yellow leaf margins on older and lower leaves, pronounced green veins or arrowhead shape in centre: **magnesium – needs calcium to be present for uptake.**

Chlorosis: yellowing of lower, older leaves, new leaves that turn light green; plant is generally weak: **nitrogen – leaches from soil over time.**

Chlorosis: new foliage has yellow or dead spots, but veins remain green: **manganese.**

Mottling of older leaves with veins remaining green. Leaves curl and there is die-back on leaf tips and margins. Young foliage soon mottles: **molybdenum – mimics nitrogen deficiency.**

Chlorosis: dark green leaves but the lower, older leaves become purplish: **phosphorus – pH affects uptake.**

Chlorosis: yellow spots develop between the veins or leaf margins on the lower, older leaves, appearing scorched: **potassium – leaches from soil over time.**

Chlorosis: light green leaves, leaf veins are often light coloured and the upper foliage is considerably lighter in colour than the lower leaves: **sulphur – leaches from soil.**

Chlorosis: lower, older foliage turns yellow between veins, dead spots become holes, and the plant is generally stunted: **zinc – high pH may limit availability.**

Correction:

In the **November Journal**, there was an orphan “H” in ' John Biel's bonsai critique', by Robert DeFreitas - please excuse this error.

Announcements

Banking update

We are doing fairly well, money-wise – **John Hoffman** will give an update at Monday's meeting.

Membership

If you still have not renewed your membership, please do so as soon as possible. For those of you who have already renewed, thank you.

Workshops

Register for our club workshops. We hold workshops during Monday night meetings and in backyards on Saturdays during the summer. Contact any member of our club executive to indicate your interest, or check in at the **members' desk** before the meeting.

Bonsai tools?

You need bonsai tools - our club sells tools. Contact **Gim Retsinas** (see back cover of Journal) for special items or a full set. He is putting together a new order with J-bonsai (<http://www.j-bonsai.com/>).

TBS website

Angelo has been working very hard to update our club website (www.torontobonsai.org) – take a look.

Forms

The membership form, introduction to bonsai, bonsai record form, and the sales sheet form, are located under **'Documents'** (at the top right of the screen) on the **TBS website**: <http://torontobonsai.org/documents/>

TBS on Facebook

Did you know that the TBS is on **Facebook**? (Click on this link, and like us today.)

Library

Did you know that our TBS library has instructional videos on DVD for club members' use? Borrow them to develop your skill in bonsai. Please return all library materials at the next meeting, before start up, and during the coffee break.

January publishing deadline

The publishing deadline for the January Journal is December 31. Please forward all photos, articles, notifications and materials before then.

Links to local bonsai clubs

Bonsai society at the RBG: <http://www.BonsaiSocietyatRBG.com>

Matsuyama bonsai society: <http://www.informdurham.com/record/OSH1103>

Misseto bonsai club: <http://www.missetobonsai.org/>

Kitchener-Waterloo bonsai society: <http://www.kwbonsai.com>

Buffalo bonsai society: <http://www.buffalobonsaisociety.com/>

Ottawa bonsai society: <http://www.ottawabonsai.org>

Societe de bonsai et de penjing de Montreal: <http://bonsaimontreal.com/#&panel1-5>

Bonsai Society of Upstate New York: <http://www.bonsaisocietyofupstateny.org/>

Regular TBS meetings

Meetings take place on the second Monday of every month, except July and August, at the TBG (Toronto Botanical Gardens), located at 777 Lawrence Avenue East, at Leslie Street, in the studio rooms upstairs at 7:45 pm. The general meetings frequently include demonstrations of bonsai techniques, critiques of bonsai trees, and workshops, in which each participant styles a tree with the help of an experienced member. These meetings are preceded at 7:00 p.m. by the the Bonsai 101 beginner sessions.

A small fee is charged for workshops; a tree, wire and an instructor are provided. To participate in workshops it is necessary to register in advance of the meeting so that materials can be provided.

Members are encouraged to bring in bonsai to show and work on during the meetings. Wire is provided at no charge. Non-members may attend a meeting at no charge to see if the club is of interest to them.

Library hours and policy

The library is open to members at the beginning of our regular meetings. Members may borrow books free of charge for one month. Late returns cost \$2 per month with a minimum charge of \$2. Please return all materials during the next meeting, and **especially** before the summer break.

Membership desk

The membership desk will be open at all meetings. The opening time may be extended for the first fall meeting to assist with renewals. You may also register for workshops there.

Tools & supplies

Tools and supplies are sold by the club at most meetings. It is a good idea to contact the 'Tools & Supplies' executive member in advance of the meeting for specific tools and supplies.

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- please talk to Carlos Bras

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The Journal was founded in January 1964, is published monthly, and exists to further the study, practice, promulgation, and fellowship of bonsai.

Visit the Toronto Bonsai Society's web site, at:

www.torontobonsai.org

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